

mous Chronicle of Evesham, MS. Bib. Bodl. fo. 96, and the Golden History of John of Tynemouth, in the same library, he converted the canons into regular monks,—in the terse words of the latter author, "*tonsoravit eos*," he shaved them, alluding to the tonsure the regular monks have on the head. The three chronicles respectively give us, as the dates of the foundation, the years 1093, 1094, and 1095, a slight variation, into which there is little use to inquire. In the meanwhile the monastery was built, and age and disease coming on, the old bardened soldier was struck with remorse, and—an expiation common enough in those days, and alluded to with such force by our greatest poet—as those who

"Dying, put on the weeds of Dominic.

Or as Franciscan think to pass disguised."—the great Hugh Lupus took the cowl, retired in the last state of disease into the monastery, and in three days was no more.

It now must be endeavoured to point out what parts of the church are the work of this proud earl. Mr. Ashpitel stated that he could not, from the most minute research, discover any portions of the Saxon church. He considered it probable that there might be some portions in the foundations, but there were none visible. It was not one of those cases where the period of the Saxon erection is within a few short years of the Conquest, and where we are told one building just built was pulled down, to be immediately replaced by another. The Saxon building must have been very old; it was much dilapidated a few years previously, when Leofric repaired it. We have the testimony of William of Malmesbury to the squalid poverty of the monks, and probably of their buildings; besides this, we have the indirect evidence of the earl's charter, where he alludes to the church in the words "*que constructa est*," which lead us to suppose it had just been built; and the direct evidence of Ordericus Vitalis above cited, who speaks of it as the church which Lupus himself had built—"quod idem Cestria construxerat."

The Norman work remaining consists of the lower part of the north-west tower, standing on the opposite side of the nave to the present Consistory Court, containing some beautiful shafts and capitals, and five lofty arches, the general character of which would lead every one to suppose the original church to have been of very fine architecture. The north wall of the nave, to the height of the windows, is likewise Norman, and contains on the side of the cloister six tombs, where, as we find from a MS. written on the back of an old charter now in the British Museum, the early Norman abbots are interred. The north transept is also of Norman work to a considerable height, and contains a very curious Norman arcade, so placed that he at first thought the original design to have been like that of Exeter,—a nave and choir, flanked by two towers, the lower parts of which were open and formed transepts. This idea, however, was disproved by authorities which afterwards were obtained.

He then explained the way in which the Gothic cathedral had, as it were, grown out of the Roman basilica, and that the circular tribunal, which terminated the Norman building, had been first elongated a little, still keeping its rounded form at the eastern end, and thus became the choir. On inquiry, he found that two bases of columns still existed in the choir, near the bishop's throne, and he showed on the plan their situation, and the probable line the old circular part then assumed.* He also pointed out on the plans the buildings which had just been opened, by the kindness of the bishop and clergy. These are vaulted apartments of early Norman work, and are described in the charter of Henry VIII. by which he divides the properties between the bishop and dean, as *promptuaria et pannaria*, the former derived from a word denoting a butler or steward, probably a buttery; and the latter from *pannus*, a cloth, probably the place for clothing.

The next point in the history of the monastery was the removal or translation of Earl Hugh's remains by Randal, the third Norman

earl. This, he states—in the charter whereby he gives the monks the land north of the abbey as far as the Northgate—he does for the good of his soul and for those of his relations. The speaker suggested, from the fact of the land to the north of the abbey having been given about this time, that it probably was the occasion of building the canon's vestry, and subsequently the chapter-house. It was necessary to inquire again among the charters and other documents for more historical information. This was to be found in the Red Book of St. Werburgh, now in the British Museum. In 1205 there is a "*significavit*," or pastoral letter from Peter de la Roche, Bishop of Winchester, stating that the church threatened "intolerable ruin"—that it was necessary to rebuild the choir and tower, which latter word, Mr. Ashpitel observed, was in the singular number, and therefore disproved his first idea that there were two flanking towers as at Exeter; that some very small attempt ("*incipiculos*") had been made to carry out this purpose, which had failed; and finally they endeavoured to raise money for the purpose. How little success this met with is clear from a pastoral letter from William, Bishop of Coventry, for the same purpose, which describes the state of the church as deplorable,—the choir open to the weather, and without doors. This, on the margin, is dated 12th of John.

Now, it is clear from the style of architecture, that the vestry, the chapter-house, and lady chapel are of date from 1220 to 1250—and accordingly we may suppose some new and unexpected source of wealth must have fallen in. In Abbot Marmion's time the convent could afford to elect a hereditary cook, and to give him large fees and privileges, and in Abbot Pinchebeck's time, from 1221 to 1240, the number of monks was increased from twenty-eight to forty. Mr. Ashpitel then described the architecture of these respective parts at some length. He dwelt particularly on the beauties of the chapter house, which he considered, with its singularly tasteful vestibule, to be the finest in the kingdom of its form;† and then took occasion to animadvert severely upon the tastelessness of a professed architectural critic, who could pass over the building with the cold criticism "poor enough." He (Mr. Ashpitel) had been told the same story, and had come down to Chester with a heavy heart, and the fear he should have an ungracious task, but he found beauties which grew on him more and more at every visit. The Norman remains, he said, are extremely fine; here is work of all kinds of great beauty, and the most curious and instructive transitions from style to style, that perhaps were ever contained in one building.‡

The next historical fact was, a quotation from the mutilated chronicle among Bishop Gastrell's MSS. In 1259, as far as the passage can be deciphered, the convent met to consider the rebuilding of the church, and, after some opposition, probably on the part of the abbot, as appears from the MS., the opinion of the convent was ordered to be carried out. About twenty years after this, a law suit, which had been long pending between the abbot and a powerful family in the neighbourhood, terminated in favour of the abbot; by allowing his adversary an annual sum, he came into possession of four immense manors. There can be but little doubt that this accession of property gave a great impetus to the works of Simon Whitechurch and his successors. At this period it is probable the building of the choir commenced. An architect would suppose that the bays to the north end of the choir were erected first—there are some corbels of decidedly earlier date—and the bases of the piers are of such decidedly early English character, compared to the other work of the same description, that there can be but little doubt this was the first attempt at rebuilding. It would be evident to the eyes of the architect that the greater portion of the choir, the tower arches, nay, even the nave itself, is of the Decorated period, that is, including transition, from 1250 to 1360.

Now, what are the recorded facts? In 1259 the monks met to consider a rebuilding; in 1281 they came into possession of large

property; and in 1284 we have a curious document. It appears that the first Edward visited the town on his way to repel the incursions of the Welsh; and in the 17th year of his reign we find in the Red Book of St. Werburgh a grant of venison, directed to Reginald Grey, who seems to have had control over the forests of Wirral and Delamere; and in a contemporary hand it states in the margin, that it "was for the monks engaged in the great work of rebuilding the church." Similar grants follow in the same way. At last we get a grant of six bucks, six does, and one stag, probably a red deer, as distinguished from the fallow deer.

There is no reason, in fact, to suppose that the works proceeded other than in regular order, following the even tenor of their way, till an unfortunate, and in fact disgraceful event occurred to the monastery. We find that Richard Seynesbury, in 1362, had misconducted himself in such a way that the Prior of St. Alban, the head of the Benedictine Order in England, and the Prior of Coventry, formed a visitation "to inquire into his offences and extensive dilapidation." The painful result was, that the abbot fled from the inquiry. The abbey was under Papal protection, being what was technically called an "exempt;" the abbot appealed to the pope, went to Italy, and died in Lombardy.

It has been shown that there is a style that an architect would designate at once as that which prevailed from 1300 to 1360; and we then find work about the abbey that bears the character of at least a hundred years later; and yet these styles have been confounded together. It is deeply to be regretted that when Mr. Ormerod published his great work, which may be designated as the prince of county histories, the knowledge of the style and period of Gothic architecture was as yet in its infancy. He would not otherwise have attributed to Simon Ripley work which seems to have been at least from 80 to 100 years earlier; nor would others have attributed much of the work to the reign of King John that clearly is at least 100 years later. But before entering into this argument, as concerns the nave of the church, it will perhaps be well to turn our attention to the north transept, or the Church of St. Oswald.

It has already been stated that the church was dedicated jointly to St. Werburgh and St. Oswald. It is doubtful at what period; but it must have been early it became a parish church. The architecture was, he thought, certainly about the year 1340 to 1360, and historical facts, which he quoted, bore out the inference.

Mr. Ormerod has attributed the erection of the tower, nave, and transept of St. Oswald's Church to this abbot, but the slightest glance at the older part of St. Oswald's will show the contrary. It appears that this notion has arisen from the fact that the two letters S and R are found twined together in the carving of the caps; but it might have been that the carving, as is often the case, would be left till the completion of the work—or, what is still more probable, the letters R and S would represent Richard Seynesbury quite as well as Simon Ripley. In fact, it is in accordance with the notion of a bad and unscrupulous man, like Seynesbury, that he should have the vanity to attach his name to works in which he had no share. If we suppose much of the work attributed to Simon Ripley to be of the earlier period, we then have a consistent account of the church of St. Oswald. Every part of this is clearly of the Decorated period, except the roof of its nave and the windows of the west, or, as it may have been called, the north-west side. These and the windows of the south aisle of the nave of the cathedral have positively Perpendicular tracery, while the jambs, shafts, gabled canopies, the hollow, the ball flowers, and the clear indication of a Decorated parapet show that the work could never be of the date 1488. But if we suppose this work to have been nearly completed in 1360, and then abandoned till the energy of Simon Ripley took up the matter, the whole is clear.

Mr. Ashpitel acknowledged with thanks the assistance of Mr. Baily, especially in the preparation of a number of diagrams by which the discourse was illustrated. Both are well entitled to the thanks of the association for the

* During the late restoration the arrangement of the Norman building was made evident, and Mr. Haasey submitted a plan of it at a meeting of the Archaeological Institute some time ago.—E.S.

† See our view of Chapter House, p. 366, ante.

‡ It was very good of Mr. Ashpitel to say all he could to make the inhabitants of Chester proud of their cathedral. We cannot, however, endorse all his praise.